Sun Safety

A Brief Summary

Skin cancer is now considered an epidemic. Over one million new cases are expected this year. Each year there are more new cases of skin cancer than the total new cancers of the prostate, breast, lung, and colon combined! One in five Americans is expected to get skin cancer in his or her lifetime, chiefly caused by exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation in sunlight. Both sunburns and tanning are outward signs indicating internal skin damage.

Personal Risk Factors

While skin cancer can afflict any individual – regardless of skin color – light-skinned people are at highest risk. Individuals most likely to succumb often have some of these characteristics:

- Fair skin
- Blue, green, or hazel eyes
- Light-colored hair
- Freckles
- A tendency to burn rather than tan
- A history of severe sunburns
- Have many moles (over 50 - 100)
- A personal or family history of skin cancer
- Outdoor worker

Timing and Environmental Sun Safety Issues

UV rays are more intense under certain time frames or conditions:

- From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- When there is lack of thick cloud cover
- From mid-spring through mid-fall
- At higher altitudes

It is important to remember that outdoor work environments – especially between 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., from March through October – can be likened to a radiation chamber.

Skin Cancer Prevention

The recommended strategies for reducing skin cancer risk are:

- Wear a wide-brimmed hat (at least 4-inch brim).
- Wear tightly-woven, loose-fitting clothing that covers as much of the body as possible, weather permitting.
- Reduce sun exposure from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., when UV rays are strongest.
- When feasible, find shade (trees, physical structures) to shield you.
- Use sunglasses that provide 100 percent UVA and UVB (broad-spectrum) protection.
- Liberally apply SPF 15 sunscreen – broad-spectrum (UVA and UVB) – to exposed skin one-half hour before going outdoors.
- Use lip balm with a SPF of 15 or greater.
- Avoid tanning salons, booths, and sunlamps.